

College Athlete NIL Litigation, Case No. 4:20-cv-03919

To the Honorable Judge Wilken,

My name is Maggie Whitham and I am currently a junior in high school. I run cross country and track, two sports which this impending settlement will devastatingly affect. Since I began running in middle school, my goal has always been to run at the Division 1 level. As a junior, I am well into the recruiting process, although not as far as I had hoped due to the proposed settlement that could transform the NCAA.

In the sport of running, development is key. Many of the fastest runners in high school frequently fall by the wayside in college, because it is very difficult to sustain such a high level of fitness without getting injured or burnt out. This is especially true for women, who reach their athletic peak in their late 20's to early 30's. This means that as female runners age and progress throughout college, they should keep developing unless outside factors prevent otherwise. With these new roster limits, walk-on spots are virtually eliminated at many Division 1 programs. Many coaches are going to place more emphasis on recruiting transfers from the transfer portal instead of taking the time to develop high school recruits. A transfer already has experience and potentially faster times, whereas it might take a year or two for a high schooler to progress to the same level. If schools are no longer developing high schoolers, we will have considerably less talent in our Olympic pool, and track and field is the largest contributor of Olympic medals for team USA. Without the opportunity for walk-on athletes to compete and develop at the highest level, we will be without many talented runners who go on to become professionals or even Olympic athletes because they never got that opportunity to flourish.

I understand that this settlement is supposed to bring new scholarship opportunities, but it may even hurt others' opportunities to attend college. Many public universities are the ones that are being hit hardest by this settlement, and these universities are also the most affordable compared to private ones. An in-state runner used to be able to walk-on at their state school and even without a scholarship pay a much less amount than they would at any private university. Public universities also tend to offer more academic merit money, making it even more affordable and rewarding those who work hard in both their sport and school. Many of these runners who would have walked on at their state school are now being forced to look at out of state schools and private universities, which could put them into hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt by the time they finish their undergraduate education. In essence, thousands upon thousands of highly motivated and successful high school student-athletes will have to make the difficult decision on whether they can financially afford to continue running during college.

Countless student-athletes and future student-athletes will lose the opportunity to play their sport at their dream university, and there will be far more athletes significantly harmed than the few that may theoretically benefit from this settlement. Please help me and countless other students maintain the opportunity to compete for our dream schools, and continue developing to the highest level as athletes. Thank you very much for your time and consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,
Maggie Whitham